LOST AND RECOVERED: CHANGING IDEALS OF MASCULINITY, STRENGTH, AND PHYSIQUE IN AND OUT OF WAR IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICA

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Abstract

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In the 20th century, American men were exposed to many different influences that shaped how they viewed themselves as men and how they achieved this ideal manhood. The main theme that connected this pursuit of masculinity was with regards to their bodies; in the physical realm, strength and physique went hand in hand with ideal manhood. This thesis explores different influences of these three interrelated elements – strength, physique, and masculinity. For organizational purposes, these influences are split between three periods highlighted by significant wars: World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. For each period, its respective war will be included as an influence of masculinity, along with other topics in the wartime era. Furthermore, there will be common consideration of the media, and significant individuals that influenced media representation, in each period to add insight into how people were thinking about the male body and masculinity at the time. Overall, the purpose of the thesis is to explore how various political, economic, and social factors contributed to a constant flux between lost and recovered manhood during 20th century wartime, and why strength and physique was a key aspect of this manhood during the century.

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Introduction

I recently watched "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" (Russo, 2014) for the second time, during which I became intrigued with the first half of the film. The film is initially set in 1942, when the United States began drafting soldiers for World War II upon the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor bombing. I noticed several themes while following the protagonist Steve Rogers in his pursuit to become a soldier and fight overseas. In the first scene of the movie, Rogers is shown shirtless, clearly lacking any size, muscle, or height, and looking to be about ninety pounds. The physician at the draft office looks at his application and sees a variety of medical conditions, looks at Rogers, and immediately rejects him. Furthermore, Rogers is ridiculed by army generals, doctors, and bullies alike due to his "unmanly" stature. I was intrigued both by the condition of draftees during World War II and the labeling of Rogers as an inadequate man. After doing some initial research, I found that in reality, a large portion of draftees was indeed not fit for battle, contrasting the film where Rogers appears as the only "weakling" in a room full of tall, muscular men. I then began thinking about the poor physical condition of men during such wars, and what that might mean for the perception of masculinity as an American populous. This train of thought urged me to write my thesis on strength, physique, and masculinity around periods of war.

Because of my initial interest in World War II draftees, I wanted to focus on the 20th century in order to have the chronology necessary to study the beginnings of physical fitness and culture, from the turn of the century to the modern era. From there, my goal was to break the century up into disparate periods of time that had the most influence on masculinity and physique. After some research I realized a convenient organization would involve three significant 20th century wars: World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. Furthermore, each

period could be traced back to moments that caused a sense of "lost" masculinity: urbanization at the turn of the century (Period 1), the Great Depression (Period 2), and the Kraus Hirschland report, (Period 3) all of which in some form or fashion showed American men that they were inadequate. Additionally, each period included a war that led to an attempt to "recover" this lost masculinity through augmentation of strength and physique. It might be beneficial to define these three interrelated concepts that headline this thesis:

Masculinity – The characteristic attributes that make someone a man. The language used in this concept is highly gendered, and related to the gender role of the male in society (Aronson 2004). Throughout history, men have come to know themselves and organize themselves on the basis of traditional gender and their perception of "being a man" (Aronson 2004). Manhood is also used interchangeably to signify the aspects that define a man. To describe the negation of masculinity, terms like effeminate and emasculated will be used, as a decline in masculinity is often socially coupled with increased femininity, or displaying womanly characteristics. In this thesis, masculinity requires stipulations that are achieved specifically through prowess in strength and physique.

Strength – The metric that defines how much physical power a man possesses. The physical power to do intensive manual labor, lift heavy objects, and play sports at the highest level is a key aspect of masculinity as defined above.

Physique – This term describes how a man is perceived visually (how good he looks), usually involving how much muscle or fat he has. The ideal male body, or physique, has shifted in its definition over the 20th century, but looking like a man had been historically integral to being considered a man.

PERIOD 1: Urbanization to World War I

Introduction

At the turn of the 20th century, more and more men began moving into American cities and obtaining white collar managerial jobs. They felt like cogs in large corporate machines, and experienced a loss of autonomy, and thus manhood. Men needed an escape from this monotony, and Theodore Roosevelt, with his promotion of the "strenuous life" became the hardy savior that men needed. Furthermore, the muscular Christianity movement and the creation of all-boys organizations centered around physical activity and the outdoors helped to soothe male anxiety about their jobs and any feminization of culture that threatened men. Into this sphere entered Eugen Sandow and Bernarr MacFadden, two popular fitness entrepreneurs that capitalized on the Roosevelt's ideals and created publishing empires of their own, proving to Americans that they had a say in becoming strong, muscular, and healthy men. At the outset of World War I, this physical conditioning became all the more important, as manhood became attached to patriotic duty in the American fight overseas. Physical education in schools became a useful way to encourage this fitness in the youth.

The Strenuous Life and Muscular Christianity: A Revolt against Urbanization

At the turn of the century, America became increasingly industrialized and urbanized, due to the rise of large for-profit corporations (Whorton 1982). In the 19th century, skilled workers and farmers enjoyed a high level of autonomy in their craft, and this autonomy was deeply coupled with manhood at the time (Kasson 2001). However, at the turn of the century, industrialization presented a threat to that autonomy. Urbanization caused cities to become crowded as the hustle of city life uprooted rural civilization, and the growing immigrant

population brought foreign culture into America (Whorton 1982). Dr. James Whorton, professor at the University of Washington, eloquently describes America at the turn of the century:

> Civilization and nature remained at odds, for the public at large as much as for hygienists. The American conscience was being tortured by the sociocultural turbulence and uncertainties of urbanization. Never had cities been so noticeably crowded and soulless and alien. The farmer's and villager's long festering distrust of crowds and bustle and rapid change was being brought to a head by the ugliness of uncontrolled industrial expansion and the sight of waves of immigrants with foreign ways breaking over urban slums. The draining away by the city of much of the better stock among country youth provided additional cause to fear the nation had lost its stabilizing agrarian anchor and was drifting into degeneracy. When these pervasive social apprehensions were combined with the hard, ancient fact that city life is less invigorating and tranquil, a physical educators' revolt against the city became a certainty (Whorton 1982)

Thus, men felt as if they were losing their identity, and thus their masculinity, in this tide of national change (Kasson 2001). Many social critics claimed white collar work was making Americans soft and weak (Churchill 2008). Physical educators sought to revolt against this new way of life by providing hope to American men that they can combat the damage of the new society by looking inwards and augmenting their own bodies (Churchill 2008). The self-made man thus became a salvation for men who felt sapped by the hustle of city life.

Theodore Roosevelt exemplified all the things a self-made man could accomplish in the face of supposed nerve damage from mentally taxing and exhausting white-collar managerial jobs. He claimed that over-civilization was sapping the strength of the nation, and that men needed to rekindle their prehistoric urges to go out and exert themselves physically in nature (Kimmel 1998). He advocated for this type of "strenuous life" as a requirement for American men to become fulfilled. If men adopted a strenuous lifestyle, according to Roosevelt, America had a chance to build up a strong defense in terms of its Army and Navy (Kimmel 1998). As he began picking up political steam in the late 19th century, he began preaching his own triumph over his timid, frail body (Kimmel 1998). In his later autobiography, he describes being a

delicate, clumsy, effeminate child whose comforting environment led him to become nervous and physically incapable (Testi 1995). Roosevelt maintained a rigorous schedule of physical training and outdoor activity in order to build himself into a real man and encouraged others to do the same (Kimmel 1998). He preached a type of success that can be achieved by any earnest, hardworking man that commits to a life of hardy labor and physical exercise (Testi 1995). To American men who felt emasculated by this new unnatural city life, Teddy became an icon of manhood. And at the turn of the century, American men aspired to be self-made like him, to shape their bodies as tools to succeed in a rapidly changing environment (Kimmel 1998).

Out of this aspiration came the rise of All-Boys organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association and the Boy Scouts of America, of which Roosevelt was an ardent supporter (Testi 1995). In these spaces, young men could compete in physically exerting activities like baseball, football, boxing, and hiking, all while building a fraternal camaraderie away from the supervision of their mothers (Testi 1995). This escape from feminization also manifested itself in American Christianity, as men feared the church was becoming feminized (Dowland 2011). Church leaders needed to aspire to a new sense of religion, one that was more hardy and virile, in order to recruit male worshippers (Dowland 2011). This movement became known as Muscular Christianity, and the first point of action for muscular Christians was to give the image of Jesus a makeover. Any imagery that portrayed Jesus as soft, effeminate, mushy, or weak was abandoned for a more visibly muscular and hardy figure (Dowland 2011). This new movement identified with many athletes and strongmen at the time, and men around the country flocked to worship a more muscular Jesus and partake in rigorous physical exercise as a sort of prayer to this idol (Dowland 2011). Furthermore, this linkage of physical culture and religion turned sport from a simple pastime to an American obsession, and may be a large reason Sport

became wildly popular in the 20th century (Green 1988). Physique augmentations thus became closely related to masculinity; a self-made muscled man who could also aspire to Christian values became an ideal of manhood.

Eugen Sandow and Primitive Bodybuilding

In the same time period, strongman Eugen Sandow became a symbol for the ideal man, promoting similar themes of self-improvement to show men how to achieve a superb physique like his. Born Freidrich Muller in Konigsberg, Prussia in 1867, Sandow became enamored with the male figure after visiting Rome and Florence with his father (Black 2013). Here, he saw strength and vitality manifested in the classic sculptures and aspired to become like them (Kunitz 2016). He was dissatisfied with school and his job as a grocery clerk, so he joined a traveling circus (Kunitz 2016). Here, Muller was fortunate to meet Professor Atilla, who was the first to tell him about the importance of lifting heavy for gaining mass. As Muller began working out and growing in size, his genetic predisposition to look like the statues was near perfect. As he performed in the circus, executing feats of unusual strength, audiences came to admire his physique more than his strength. It is interesting to note that at the time, there was a cultural opposition to having "cosmetic" muscles that were big but weak. Muller was changing this idea performance after performance. Through his strength, he was able to champion the idea of the male physique (Kunitz 2016).

After touring Europe with the circus, he decided to make a trip to America. Here, he met Florenz Ziegfeld, a marketing genius with the knack for increasing clients' popularity. Marketing Muller under his new name, Eugen Sandow, his popularity skyrocketed in the US, as crowds flocked to see him display his impeccable body. Ziegfeld saw that marketing Sandow as the most

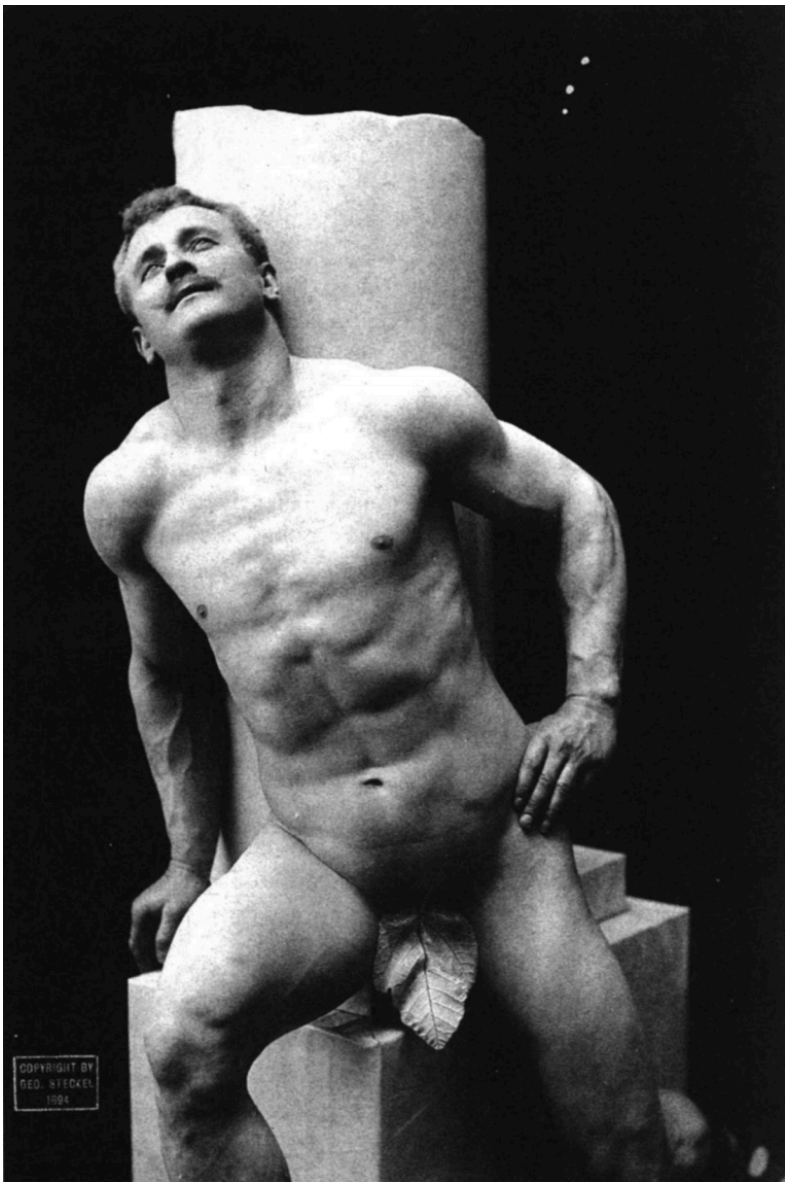
well developed man would draw more crowds than simply just the strongest man, and he used the popularity of urban city culture and vaudeville theater to springboard this success (Kasson 2001). For the first time, Americans were obsessed with looking at this perfect specimen of a man just for his body, revealing a shift in the public eye. The male body became the focus of public attention, and it slowly started to become acceptable to adore and revel at a man's body (Kunitz 2016).

Sandow used his popularity to market his muscle as a symbol of masculinity and health. He promoted the idea, alongside MacFadden, that muscles could be trained to improve a host of factors in one's health (Luciano 2001). Sandow's perfection in the public eye generated a consequential pull for men to have the same physique. Sandow's influence also had long ranging influences for masculinity in America. After the Panic of 1893, the stock market's stability translated to masculinity; the concept of manhood was not stable and there were no guarantees to American men that they would ever be secure in their manhood, and that it would have to be defended by all means necessary for preservation sake (Kasson 2001). Sandow was the manifestation of this defense of masculinity; his performances showed that there was a way to overcome instability through exercise. This strong, confident, handsome man presenting himself on stage injected confidence in the frail ideal of the man at the time. Sandow became the symbol of the hyper masculine, heroically fighting economic woes with extraordinary muscular development and confident presentation.

The presentation of the body as an object to be openly admired by men and women alike created a fantasy for American men that they considered necessary to becoming real men. Piggybacking on this want, Sandow published *Strength and How to Obtain It* along with *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture* to publicize his brand and showcase more "perfect"

physiques (Green 1988). Sandow's publications associated masculinity with self-determination, as readers followed his personal intervention in his past life as a weak acrobat. Thus, the strong body became a symbol of the manly character and command over life, and the north star for masculine achievement in America. This universal image of the better man applied to men in all areas of the socioeconomic spectrum.

However, this brash and raw presentation of Sandow's well developed body created one of the first instances of insecurity with the male body in America. Never before was a body so popularized and connected with classical Greek and Roman ideals (as seen in his poses mimicking famous sculptures). Sandow wanted to bring out the best in all men, but on the flip side, his presentation highlighted men's inadequacies if they did not look like that. As a reporter noted, "one look at him is enough to make the average young man thoroughly disgusted with himself" (Kasson 2001). Sandow also made the evaluation of the male body mainstream, and these evaluations resulted in a stratification of men based on their physique. Another point of insecurity was the way in which women treated Sandow. They would be invited backstage to feel his muscles and through their anecdotes, we can see high class women being overjoyed by the experience. To the men at the time, female attention represented a fantasy that they could not achieve without that kind of body. These themes of evaluation and jealousy came to a head in 1893, when a woman outside of a Casino attacked Sandow (Kasson 2001). The public was appalled that such a perfect man could even be attacked in this way, which symbolized an assault on manhood. A string of imposters who also built their bodies dampened Sandow's perfection, copying Sandow's poses, leaving Americans to question the value of a body so easily "counterfeited". Nonetheless, Sandow remedied any masculine anxieties himself, as he sold machines and guides to help men regain control of any lost manhood.



(Figure 1 in Waugh 1992)

Bernarr MacFadden and Physical Culture

In 1893, Bernard MacFadden visited the Chicago World's Fair, arriving at the Lake Michigan peristyle by boat (Todd 1987). Here he witnessed the representation of classical Greek nude statues, and this vision solidified his view of the human body (Hunt 1989). More

significantly, it was the first time MacFadden was exposed to Eugen Sandow's physique. Jan Todd, professor at the University of Texas, writes:

> Performing at the Fair on the midway was a man who was to have another lasting impact on young MacFadden - Eugen Sandow, the professional strongman. From Sandow, MacFadden learned the showman's tricks of muscular display; and though this same showmanship was later used by the smaller MacFadden in his own posing exhibitions (Todd 1987)

After the Fair, MacFadden wished that his contemporaries would share his wonderment at the male figure and its potential, and wanted to influence people to adopt this philosophy (Hunt 1989).

As a local wrestler and wrestling match organizer, McFadden became a local celebrity, making a comfortable income in the process (Adams 2009). Wanting more of this "celebrity status" he moved to Boston, where he believed he could access a larger audience (Adams 2009). Here, people would ask McFadden to help whip them into shape, and were willing to pay large sums to do so (Adams 2009). He found his opportunity, and realized that many people wanted advice on being fit (Adams 2009).

Under a new moniker, Bernarr MacFadden, began to publish his new magazine, *Physical Culture*, its first volume releasing in 1899 (Adams 2009). MacFadden promoted weakness as a crime, and created the idea that there is no excuse to being weak. This ideology was inseparable from American manhood at the time; being a "man" could not be accomplished if one had a weak body. In 2 years, *Physical Culture* became a nationwide success, as MacFadden began adding celebrity testimonials, photographs of near nude bodies, and new controversial topics every month (Adams 2009). Readers were hooked on the notion of improving themselves for the better. The theme of self-improvement also prevailed in many of the volumes, and the quest to become a better man was a pursuit American men at the time had been drawn to, especially after

the loss of stability and hope after the Panic of 1893 (Adams 2009). For example, in a 1903 issue of *Physical Culture* that challenged readers to develop the best physique, presenting a $1000 award to "the most perfect specimen of physical manhood" (Adams 2009). Using such marketing techniques, MacFadden was able to influence the common middle class American man to begin associating manhood with aesthetic muscle. This theme continued throughout the life of the magazine (Adams 2009).

MacFadden even began to organize events for his fans, like the Physical Culture Exhibition, to show the world how his readers improved their lives through exercise (Adams 2009). These events were not without controversy, as critics like Anthony Comstock argued over the purpose of flaunting the male body and its association with manhood (Adams 2009). Comstock believed the exposure of the male body was a sin and was degrading to the American public (Adams 2009). However, Bernarr "Body Love" MacFadden believed that it would be a waste not to present the beauty of the male body (Hunt 1989). Through this display of the male body at numerous events, MacFadden became the torchbearer for popularized bodybuilding (Adams 2009). Bodybuilders respected MacFadden and used his publications to boost their popularity in the early 1900s. Competitions for the best physique were unprecedented in America, and MacFadden's pursuits did much to advance the notion of exercising for the sole purpose of augmenting muscles.

Sales of *Physical Culture* notably peaked at the beginning of WW1, as Americans realized the soldiers being drafted were weak boys (Hunt 1989). Physical weakness was hurtful to American masculinity, which became increasingly attached with success on the battlefield (Hunt 1989). We were producing soldiers who were simply not real men (Hunt 1989). The

emasculated then turned to MacFadden, whose teachings could magically make them strong men who were not afraid of the battlefield and could win US the war (Hunt 1989).

MacFadden had many influential contributions to the concept of the male body in America in the early 1900s. The first idea he championed was that the body was not something you are simply given and forced to accept. It is something for which to take responsibility over, and to diligently mold, using the principles outlined in *Physical Culture*. It is not a static vessel of humanity, but a dynamic and beautiful object in itself, which we should all work to perfect. This enhanced self-control over one's success in life was a welcome perspective after the seemingly uncontrollable economy where businesses were dropping left and right. MacFadden's theme of taking responsibility for one's own health was also far ahead of its time, as it is the concept underlying many fitness movements today (Goldstein 1992).

MacFadden's also asserted many conditionals to American masculinity. First of all, a weak man wasn't a man at all. MacFadden considered weakness as tantamount to sinning against God, and imposed a certain fear of being weak (Hunt 1989). Fear driven consumption of *Physical Culture* thus became a probable contributor to its massive sales success. Religious sinners absolved themselves through reading the Bible; sinners of the body read *Physical Culture*. MacFadden believed this weakness would also decrease the health of his readers, and he also tied health to manhood. In the *Encyclopedia of Physical Culture* MacFadden outlines "health is what gives manhood to man" and in *Physical Culture* "the man who is looking for health, but does not want muscles, will search in vain" (Whorton 1982). Another key aspect to manhood was sexual virility. MacFadden believed that the blood flow generated during weightlifting would refresh the sexual organs and promote fertility. In his publication *Virile Powers*, he writes:

> The great importance of strong sexual powers cannot be too strongly emphasized. Their influence on life is marvelous. If a fine, vigorous man acquires a complaint that weakens his sexual organs, his powers in every way will begin to decline – his muscles will grow weaker, his nerves will be affected, and unless a change is quickly made, he will soon become a physical wreck (Whorton 1982)

MacFadden suggested that exercising to augment one's muscles would make a strong, healthy, and fertile man, and that these conditions were necessary to keep one's masculinity intact.

One negative influence that grew out of MacFadden's overconfidence is that he promoted the building of the body as a means to protect the Nordic European race (Green 1988). Since blonde Europeans pushed human progress, that progress would only be continued through strong white male bodies. MacFadden used statistics (of questionable accuracy) to promote the idea that better races needed to reproduce more and lesser races needed to reproduce less. This meant that *Physical Culture* really only was important for a certain segment of the population, to the detriment of minority groups also becoming interested in bodybuilding (Green 1988).

Desires of Man in the Early 20th Century

Sandow and MacFadden showed American men that they needed to be physically strong in order to succeed and protect their masculinity. By exposing Americans to images of peak male physiques and organizing physique competitions, the masculine ideal was quickly associated with these bodybuilders, as they became the symbol of real men. Publications by both pioneers fed off of this fervor, and grew in popularity due to the publicized connection between self-determination and manhood at the time. The flashy, confident, and controversial publications fit an unprecedented customer need in America. After the Panic of 1893, men felt powerless to control a future that seemed completely out of their reach. But somehow, through the influence of Sandow and MacFadden, an element of control resurfaced through the human body. If men

could use physical exercise to control their physique, health, and fertility, as the publications emphasized again and again, they could finally be empowered to take an active role in determining their own masculinity. However, this connection between the body and manhood did not come without its collateral damage, manifested in insecurities revealed by comparing to the ideal. American men would often feel uncomfortable due to bodybuilders that flaunted their developed bodies in the public, while the layman sits contemplating if his physique is good enough; and as an extension, whether he is a real man. Through a massive dissemination of fitness propaganda, publications like *Physical Culture* were influential in crafting the ideal image of man, and since its consumption was so widespread, so became the evaluation of the common man. Daily pressures mounted for men that did not aspire to be physically big and strong, and they increasingly turned to the regimens preached by MacFadden and Sandow to remedy these negative feelings.

In a sense, these pioneers catered to two distinct but interconnected desires of the American man in the early 1900s. First, the desire to reclaim lost manhood and stability after economic downturn. The presentation of physiques for audiences around the nation and the ability of self-determination to achieve these physiques increased confidence in achieving manhood by the common American man. However, it also increased pressure, constant evaluation, and insecurity for men that were disadvantaged in terms of physique. These men, however, increasingly turned to fitness gurus like MacFadden to conquer their insecurities of having a less developed body, and met the second desire of improving their physique to match popular bodybuilders. It was a unique moment in history where pioneers not only solved an existential problem for men, but also created an ideal for these same men to constantly compare against. This was one of the biggest reasons for such widespread success and influence by these

fitness entrepreneurs. They were ahead of their time in seeing what the American man wanted and why, and manipulated this vision to cause a paradigm shift in how muscular men were viewed and why they were important to the concept of manhood.

World War I and Patriotic Duty

Due to the wild and sometimes controversial success of these fitness entrepreneurs, Americans began to focus on physical health and became conscious of their own bodies in the early 1900s. However, the physical judgment of American men was the most pronounced at the beginning of World War I, where prospective soldiers were put to the test. Still, there was a nagging fear that American men were not going to be able to fight, due to the many militiamen who had been deemed physically unfit to fight in the Spanish-American war (Churchill 2008). It was yet to be seen whether the rise of *Physical Culture* at the turn of the century could manipulate the bodies of young American men to be strong fighters in the upcoming World War.

Pockets of schools around the nation began preparing for war just as it began in 1914. For example, the Chicago School Board began a Reserve Officer training program in 1915 and made physical educators undergo rigorous military training (Churchill 2008). MacFadden even created a (failed) movie series aimed at preparing men for the war (Waugh 1992). In 1917, as the United States decided to enter the war, over 2.5 million men between 21 and 30 were given physical examinations to determine if they were fit to fight. Approximately a third of these men were rejected, pointing to the overall weakness of the young men who grew up in the early (Wingate 2005). In contrast to the pre-war era of masculinity that was attached to the individual man's body, American men as a whole were now at a nationwide point of concern. The US was producing soldiers who were simply not fit to fight, and thus, not real men (Hunt 1989).

It thus became a man's patriotic duty to become able to fight in the war, and the media emphasized this sense of patriotism in a fighting man. For example, according to Susan Brewer "[President] Wilson told foreign correspondents off the record that he thought "the American people would feel a very much more ardent interest in the war if their men were fighting under their own flag" instead of being thrown into a nebulous European theater (Brewer 2009). Posters like "Over the top" (Riesenberg 1918) showing an American soldier cradling the stars and stripes made a direct connection between patriotism and fighting. Some media outlets even referred to the war as therapy for American men. On a Committee of Public Information handout, entitled "He Will Come Back a Better Man" (CPI), the concept of augmenting the physical body through the war was clear: "A broad-shouldered, deep-chested, square jawed YOUNG MAN with flashing eyes and a happy smile - that's who will throw himself into your arms when Johnny comes marching home again" (CPI 1918). Wilson wanted Americans to believe that they were fighting to improve themselves and thus America in a strongly intentioned effort to offset the large rejection numbers found in 1917.

It is important as well to discuss why a war of this scale had leverage on the mentality of American men and why the media was so influential in creating a necessity for a physical augmentation as a means to improve the nation as a whole. Through the unprecedented inspections of men on such a large scale, the US government examined both the physical conditions and the masculinity of each prospective soldier. Men felt like the public was judging them and needed to prove themselves in the face of this judgment. Through the inspections, the men were given a purpose to use their body as a tool or weapon to advance the motives of the United States (Kilshaw 2009). The high rejection numbers meant that this purpose was left unfulfilled, damaging masculinity in the process. And since a vast majority of the armed forces

were men, the rejection meant they were no different than the women or children who could not fight in the war. To recover this "lost" manhood, their physical bodies needed to be improved. This improvement was manifested in the media through physical education campaigns by the government but was also used as a marketing platform by fitness entrepreneurs like Charles Atlas after the war. In general, men needed to be strong, fit, and athletic to be real men and it was thus their duty to preserve America's strength after the war, which had complicated implications for masculinity. According to 20th century physician R Tait McKenzie, "Athletics are a sort of rehearsal of fighting and as such a substitute for war. The ability to fight, to protect, or to conquer appeals to all of us and these elemental qualities are intimately associated with the survival of any great and powerful race" (Dubuc 1923).

Starting in 1917, mainstream focus began shifting to the physical condition of young men. It was clear that physical fitness was in need of dire improvement if America was going to maintain its strength and determination in the future. There was also a lingering fear that during peacetime, soldiers' vitality would be threatened (Dowland 2011). Elwood Brown, director of YMCA Athletics wrote:

> [Peace] will bring about an increased danger from moral temptations … and will call for very constructive and interesting bodily activity if the dangers of disorderly physical expression are to be avoided (qtd. in Dowland 2011).

The American youth was encouraged to get active and strive to become stronger, abler-bodied men in the media. During the war, Walter Camp created his famous "Daily Dozen" exercises, which could be done at home without weights, by people young and old. Camp's aim was to create strong bodied men and women for the war effort. The Navy and President Wilson's cabinet even used Camp's exercises (Arbuckle 1917). Bicycle companies printed ads proclaiming it was a young man's duty to live a "strenuous life" like former President Theodore

Roosevelt and become more active in riding bicycles to improve their health, conveniently selling product in the process (Turpin 2015). In 1920, The Department of Education was formally renamed The Department of Physical Education and Military Training, emphasizing the direct relationship between physical education and military preparedness (Churchill 2008). Furthermore, in the next decade, twenty-seven states would go on to pass legislature encouraging schools to adopt a more rigorous physical education protocol so that young men would grow to be able bodied men (Oberteuffer 1962).

PERIOD 2: The Great Depression to World War II

Introduction

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, many men became unemployed and unable to feed their families, losing trust in large organizations like the government, business, and the medical community. The ideal of man as a "breadwinner", a provider for his family, disintegrated with the economy and men felt hopeless and emasculated. After FDR became president, his New Deal policies help mitigate some of this anxiety, as organizations like the CCC encouraged men to be physically active and productive in boosting the economy. Leading up to World War II, these New Deal workers began undergoing military training and manhood soon became attached to the soldier ideal, much like in the previous period. Propaganda showing masculine soldiers fighting for their country became very popular in associating strength and muscle with the soldier. However, as the government screened millions of soldiers, Americans realized that an alarming number of them were physically unfit for war, raising questions about future success in war.

The Great Depression and Lost Masculinity

The Stock Market Crash in 1929 and the subsequent economic downturn of the Great Depression had quite damaging effects on masculinity and the male body once again became the symbol of this damage. As the unemployment rate rose, and men became less able to feed themselves let alone their families, the malnourished male body became all too common (Houck, Kiew 2003). According to writer Roger Babson, the worst part of the Depression was that consumers were tired because of the economy, and thus too tired to contribute to it (Houck, Kiew 2003). Even employed men lost almost a third of their income, and many jobs became reduced to

part-time labor (Jarvis 2004). Paralleled with this economic despair came mental despair as well, as the suicide rate for men increased significantly during the first few years of the Depression (Jarvis 2004).

This economic downturn was able to physically represent itself in the body and emasculated the "breadwinner" archetype, creating instead a sickly, diseased, weak, and depressed man (Armengol 2014). Media outlets capitalized on this male anxiety, showing the necessity of the man supporting the family (Jarvis 2004). A Listerine ad in 1934 showed a depressed looking unemployed white-collar worker that needed the product to become more likeable (Jarvis 2004). A Fidelity Investments advertisement asked "What would happen to us John, if you lost your job" (qtd. in Jarvis 2004), reflecting the man's role as a provider, and then urging the man to take advantage of opportunities provided by Fidelity (Jarvis 2004).

Sociological studies conducted during the 1930s even showed that unemployment had severely threatened male status (Maher 2002). In a 1937 study, Robert and Helen Lynd found that the key to a man's self-worth and purpose was his "economic solvency" (Suzik 1999). Psychologist Winifred Richmond found that boys coming of age in the 1930s found it extremely difficult to consider themselves as having become men (Suzik 1999). These young men were constantly seeking support and could not attain economic independence, which was severely emasculating (Suzik 1999). Cultural anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer, investigating American society between 1935 and 1939 noticed that Americans were "deathly afraid of being called sissies" (qtd. in Suzik 1999). The Great Depression thus exacerbated the sense of prolonged dependency that defined men as "sissies" (Suzik 1999).

Furthermore, the self-made man of the roaring twenties was now faced with the consequence of the American dream – a renowned uncertainty in the economy and distrust of

larger organizations and businesses (Armengol 2014). Businesses were not trusted due to their inability to keep and support workers. The government was not trusted due to its inability to provide sufficient aid to the people. The economy was not trusted due to its newfound volatility and instability. Even the medical community became distrusted due to its inability to provide the right care and resources for many men who became sick during the Depression (Houck, Kiew 2003).

In the 1930s, economic success for men returned to a lost dream, an unattainable notion that was so susceptible to larger, unstable institutions that it could not rescue masculinity. So men turned to the only thing they had direct control over – their physical bodies. Success in the realm of physique was a realistic goal that men around the country could intervene in to recover their sense of manhood (Armengol 2014). To Babson and other writers in the 1930s, the only way to mitigate this economic despair was the "unbeatable prescription of a sound mind in a sound body" (qtd. in Houck, Kiew 2003).

FDR, The New Deal, and Physical Recovery

As masculinity became increasingly manifested in physical strength and the male body, Franklin Roosevelt had a difficult time running for the office of President in 1932 due to his physical disability. An article written in 1931 encapsulated Americans' concerns by asking "Is Franklin D. Roosevelt Physically Fit to be President" (qtd. in Houck, Kiew 2003). However, with a campaign heavily dismissing his disability as debilitating and promoting FDR as a resilient leader who can overcome physical woes, he was able to win. The emphasis on physical fitness apparent in his campaign also became a large driver of his famous New Deal policies to save America from the Depression. In 1933, FDR asked Congress to create the Civilian

Conservation Corps (CCC) to take unemployed men out into nature to experience healthful surroundings and contribute productively to the economy (Maher 2002). This push to get men outside and use physical labor to rejuvenate themselves immediately draws parallels to Theodore Roosevelt's push for the strenuous outdoor life at the turn of the century.

The CCC was successful in augmenting the male body to become physically stronger and thus more masculine, employing 2.9 million men to build parks, repair roads, and renovate public spaces (Jarvis 2004). It also allowed young men to participate in athletic competitions and have ample free time to explore nature and the surrounding city life (Suzik 1999). Young men who joined the corps gained an average of thirteen pounds, thanks to the physical labor and plentiful food provided to the workers (Maher 2002). Men were delighted at their body transformations, competing with other men to see who could gain the most muscle (Maher 2002). Incidents of tuberculosis amongst the Corps men also dropped significantly (Maher 2002). The self-proclaimed "boys" who had initially joined the corps felt like they regained their masculinity and were slowly becoming "men" through strenuous exercise, ample food, and a multitude of opportunities to put their body to a purpose (Maher 2002). A 1939 Cartoon shows its main character Wilbur impressing his parents after work in the CCC (Maher 2002 Figure 3).

In the cartoon, Wilbur returns home physically larger, which points to another key aspect of masculinity's definition during the New Deal. According to Dr. Jeffrey Suzik, "to attain full social validation as a man, it seems, one needed to be brawny and bronzed along with being financially self-sufficient" (Suzik 1999). Out of other New Deal programs, specifically the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the CCC was exemplified by the media as a "man-building" agency (Jarvis 2004). In his book *Now They Are Men*, Corps director James McEntee discussed the connection between physical work and manhood, labeling the CCC as an arena for creating men out of boys (Jarvis 2004). Published photographs showed CCC men participating in tasks displaying physical strength, sometimes even pictured shirtless to further display their newfound muscular physique (Jarvis 2004).

This display of physical conditioning was welcomed in an era where Charles Atlas became successful selling his muscle building techniques and displaying his musculature for American men to adore (Suzik 1999). Even in Atlas' rhetoric, emphasis was placed on turning boys into men, specifically through physique changes. In a 1930s Cartoon, "The Insult that Made a Man Out of Mac", Atlas urges the reader "Let me PROVE I can make you a new MAN" (Ref in Echberg 2008). In these types of advertisements, Atlas targeted vulnerable young men who felt they were too weak to be productive, and capitalized on their post-Depression anxieties (Stokvis 2006). Such rhetoric alongside the successes of the CCC in its man-building endeavors became instantly popular with Atlas' reader base. Olympian and sociologist Ruud Stokvis describes Atlas' promotion of bodybuilding in the 1930s:

> Charles Atlas epitomized the more traditional image of bodybuilding as a means for small men with a sense of inferiority concerning their appearance to remove these feelings, by building their bodies up to a larger size in order to impress other people. This image was modified following the example of the group of people who, since the 1930s had come together at Santa Monica Beach in California to participate in acrobatics, weightlifting, strength training and bodybuilding. It is said that some of the people from Santa Monica Beach, or 'Muscle Beach' as it came to be known, also practiced bodybuilding to overcome feelings of inferiority. However, the image of the people of Muscle Beach, as it came to be represented in illustrated magazines and later on film, was one of sexually attractive, beautifully built, healthy, carefree people, who were amusing themselves on the sunny beaches of California. Its geographical closeness to Hollywood also added to its glamour. In their advertisements and articles, Charles Atlas and the other strength seekers promoted themselves to people who were struggling for a respectable place in society (Stokvis 2006).

(Ref in Echberg 2008)

However, physique improvements alone did not build the man; the CCC photographs continually emphasized the value of the productive work these men did. It still remained that to be defined as a man, one needed to work and provide, with physique becoming an important supplement to manhood (Suzik 1999).

(Figure 1 Suzik 1999)

These gendered visual representations of the work in the CCC helped to calm anxieties that men experienced during the Great Depression and restored their value as the main provider in the traditional American family (Jarvis 2004). In most of the New Deal media depictions, women were not shown as frequently, a device probably used to prevent a resurfacing

emasculation through a growing female presence in the workplace. Images of women usually were restricted to the domestic home life (Jarvis 2004).

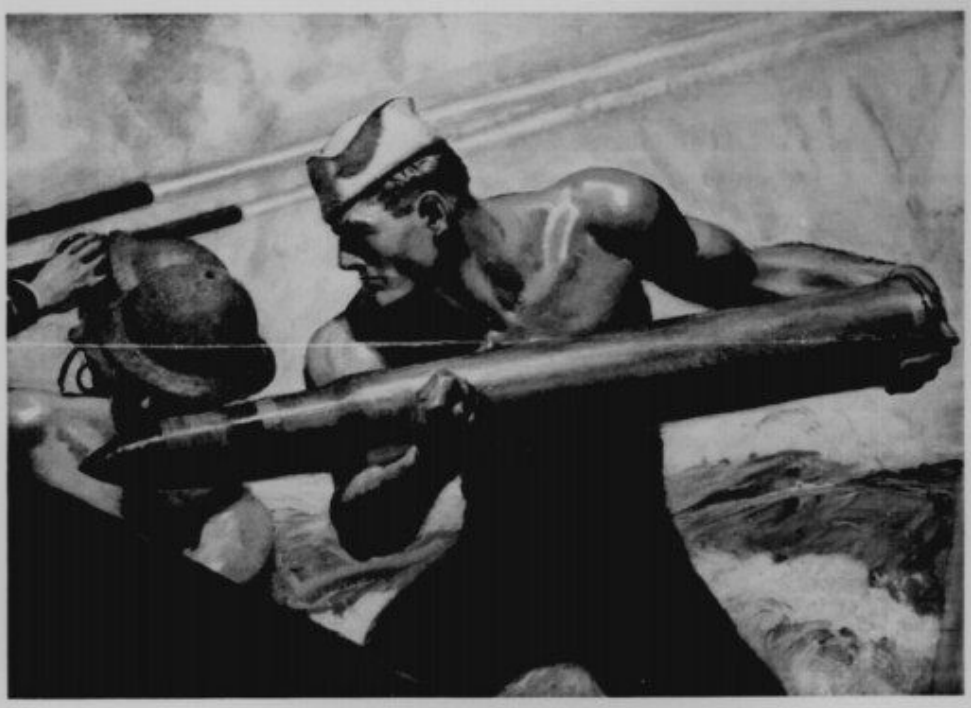
Preparing for War

In the short term after the Great Depression occurred, men strove to define themselves as providers to both their families and society as a whole to recover their manhood. Thus, working in the CCC was a productive effort that returned a semblance of hope and security to the traditional breadwinning man. However, in the late 1930s, as America became concerned with instability in Europe, the definition of masculinity had shifted from the breadwinner to the patriotic soldier (Suzik 1999). Calls to militarize CCC camps became more and more publicized, but there was significant pushback amongst advocates of a strictly "man-building" organization (Suzik 1999). Eventually, after World War II began, CCC enrollees were required to complete military training (Suzik 1999). Photographs of shirtless workers soon gave way to those of stoic military men with immaculately pressed uniforms standing at attention (Suzik 1999). By the late 1930s, the CCC was seen as a costly program that created over-dependent boys that were not self-sufficient (Suzik 1999). In order to become real men these boys needed to become patriotic men and contribute to their country through the international war effort. In 1942, the CCC was extinct (Suzik 1999).

To push these ex-CCC young men into the war effort, the media became an influential mechanism to associate the soldier with masculinity. The male physique became integral to World War II American propaganda, as artists never failed to showcase a strong body to symbolize a strong, masculine country (Jarvis 2004). The hyper-masculine imagery of the male body represented the strength and resolve of American men, but also America as a whole

(Jellison 2018). The men portrayed in these media representations shared interesting characteristics. They were tall, white, broad shouldered, and baring their sinewy forearms executing some physically exerting action for their country (Jellison 2018). In a 1943 advertisement for *Life* Magazine, the reader is urged to "find a survivor from Guadalcanal and ask him what it feels like to meet a US Marine! How well every Jap knows the truth today … for he's up against men with iron wills and nerves of steel – and bodies hard as nails" (Jarvis 2004). The ad subsequently displays lean, muscular men in their undershirts manning weapons to fight the Japanese. Many such posters, like Barclays' "Man the Guns" in the early 1940s showed similar looking muscled men loading weapons into guns (Jarvis 2004).

Bob Hoffman's (See Period 3) influential magazine *Strength and Health* also increased its rhetoric of nationalism with regards to the soldier's body in the years leading up to World War II (Morais 2015). In the October 1940 issue, entitled "The Nations Build the Bodies of Their Youth", Robert Arndt discussed the physical preparedness of Nations like the Soviet Union, and explained the drive for men to become stronger for readiness on the battlefield (Morais 2015). The issue showed images of foreign men holding rifles and training with grenades, probing anxieties of American men watching the events unfolding overseas (Morais 2015). Future issues of *Strength and Health* also tried to persuade Americans that strength was the single greatest attribute to possess for dominance on the warfront (Morais 2015).



Man the
GUNS
Join the NAVY

PERIOD 3: The Golden Age of Capitalism and the Cold War

Introduction

Interestingly, during World War II, the USA was allied with the Soviet Union, but soon after, relations turned sour. Americans disapproved of Soviet communism and its threatening expansion into Eastern Europe, and Soviets resented Americans' lack of recognition of the Soviet Union as an international power. It should be noted that this tension and competition was the "War" even though no physical battles were fought. This competition manifested itself in arenas such as nuclear weapons, space technology, and as argued below, athletic competition, in order to establish one nation as the dominant world power in the late 20th century.

The Kraus-Hirschland report exacerbated post-World War II anxieties about the physical condition of Americans. It concluded that Americans had poor physical fitness both absolutely and relatively compared to European nations. The report also revealed that the postwar Golden Age of Capitalism, with its increasing incomes and standards of life, created a festering softness in the male population. Softness created a lost masculinity, especially during the Cold War, as competition was at its highest with the Soviet Union and communism. Furthermore, Americans became concerned about the "muscle gap" between the two superpowers, and athletic competitions in the 1950s and 60s showed that Soviets were becoming physically dominant, an almost unacceptable feeling for the American men both watching and competing in these events. As the infamous Dr. Ziegler began experimenting with steroids to give Americans the edge in this muscle gap, powerlifters and bodybuilders alike began to use these steroids to give them a competitive edge. With this came a philosophical debate between training for strength, with Bob

Hoffman, and training for bodily aesthetic, with Joe Weider, as they both created publishing empires to push their respective philosophies during the Cold War. As bodybuilders and powerlifters were torn between strength and physique, the normal American man was overall disinterested with being so obsessed with fitness, until the data showed that heart disease was killing men at an unprecedented rate, another blow to masculinity. Scientists and doctors realized heart disease was due to poor lifestyle choices, and the remedy for these choices came with Dr. Kenneth Cooper's theory on Aerobics. With a prescription to become physically active, Americans became obsessed with all things cardio, and success in running competitions ignited this craze further. Nearing the end of the Cold War, men were able to rekindle early century self-sufficiency with the bodybuilding movement. The ability to augment one's body to become visibly muscular became a symbol of the ideal man, and individuals like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Steve Reeves, and Sylvester Stallone through their media representation increased the obsession of the ideal male body image, which continues to today.

The Kraus Hirschland Report and the President

The Kraus-Weber test was a test of physical fitness consisting of the following exercises: bent-leg situp, straight-leg situp, standing toe touch, double-leg lift, and trunk extension (Plowman and Smith 2014). In the early 1950s, this test was administered to both American and European children to see which children could obtain "a minimum of muscular strength and flexibility" (Kraus and Hirschland 1953). In 1953, physicians Hans Kraus and Ruth Hirschland conducted a study to test this question, and in their famous report "Muscular Fitness and Health" concluded that 56% of American children between 6 and 19 years of age failed to meet this minimum standard. The two physicians believed that the high failure rate was harmful to the

well-being and health of American youth. Not only were the majority of American youth failing this seemingly simple test, but European countries performed much better on the Kraus-Weber tests, as only 8% of European children failed (De Oca 2013). Furthermore, more than 30% of American children failed to pass the muscular strength portion of the tests, which only 1% of European children failed (De Oca 2013). Kraus and Hirschland had ideas about why Europeans were succeeding; because European countries did not have the luxury of mechanized transportation and convenience, and thus had to use their physical bodies to move or be productive (McKenzie 2013). Given the context of the Cold War, the report was a huge blow to the American mentality, as foreigners were beating Americans in battle and in physical fitness (Luciano 2001). The report exposed Americans as unprepared for war, and after tests in both World Wars I and II showed a similar unpreparedness, a decline in masculinity was imminent.

The Kraus-Hirschland report had deep political ramifications, and changed the White House's view on American success related to physical fitness. This report came as a shock to President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon, who asserted "While we are not a nation of softies, we could become one, if proper attention is not given to the opportunities for normal physical, health giving exercises" (Dunne 2013). Nixon then called a White House meeting in July of 1955 to discuss a proper reaction to this report, and he concluded that the nation needed to realize the significance of being fit (Luciano 2001). The following year, President Eisenhower by executive order created the President's Council on Youth Fitness, an organization whose purpose it was to get the bodies and minds of American children in shape (McKenzie 2013). For the Eisenhower administration, the resounding belief was that if the youth are not developed, the next generation of American men and soldiers will be just as unprepared as the past, which was simply unacceptable in the Cold War atmosphere. This ideology meant prescriptions for daily

activity for children in school to improve "fitness", however the definition of fitness was unclear. Parents did not know whether their child was properly "fit" to American standards and measuring metrics for the population as a whole was a difficult task. Furthermore, since programs were targeted for children, there was no clear course of action for older American men (Luciano 2001).

The Kennedy administration also had its own take on physical fitness, inspired as well by the perceived softness of America and the susceptibility to communist penetration. Kennedy saw American bodies as a valuable national resource that needed to be researched and developed, much like weapons, to show promising strength and dominance as a nation. He was also deeply concerned with the erosion of masculinity and the decline of American manhood during the Cold War (Dean 1998). In an unprecedented move, before taking office, President-Elect Kennedy published an article in *Sports Illustrated* entitled "The Soft American". In it, he made reference to the Kraus-Weber tests and the decline of the American body, despite growing abundance of food, luxury, and perceived well-being. He also directly related the neglect of the American body and the increased threat to security of the nation.

> But physical fitness is as vital to the activities of peace as to those of war, especially when our success in those activities may well determine the future of freedom in the years to come. We face in the Soviet Union a powerful and implacable adversary determined to show the world that only the Communist system possesses the vigor and determination necessary to satisfy awakening aspirations for progress and the elimination of poverty and want. To meet the challenge of this enemy will require determination and will and effort on the part of all American. Only if our citizens are physically fit will they be fully capable of such an effort (Kennedy 1960)

Upon criticizing the ineffectiveness of Eisenhower's policies, Kennedy in the article also outlined several policy initiatives he would follow through with in office. Eventually, Kennedy renamed the President's Council for Youth Fitness to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to reflect these changes.

Throughout the 1950s, the media was also pivotal in disseminating the fact that Americans were simply soft and weak, rhetoric that pervaded the war against communism at the time. Arthur Schlesinger blamed the postwar excess in luxury as the reason for the development of men "lacking the vitality to carry out the liberal-imperialist tradition of Teddy Roosevelt" (De Oca 2013). Reporters jumped at the opportunity to question the nation's fitness. According to historian Shelly McKenzie, "newspapers and magazines across the United States were reporting that American children were unfit, sparking a national conversation about fitness. *Cosmopolitan* asked "Are We and Our Children Getting Too Soft" *Ladies' Home Journal* wondered "How Fit Are Our Children" and *Newsweek* explained "Why the President is Worried about Our Fitness" (McKenzie 2013). A New York Times article concluded that the "over privileged, overprotected, overindulged child of the oversolicitious parent may well grow up with problems as difficult to himself as those of the youngster (Dunne 2013). In the Chicago Tribune, writer Marcia Winn claimed "Today's children sit … onto a cushion in front of the television set. The result is that American children have the most used buttocks and the least used back and leg muscles of any children in the world" (Dunne 2013). *Sports Illustrated* claimed this problem of physical fitness "goes far deeper and has more serious implications for the future of the nation than many of those which haunt the headlines daily" (Boyle 1955). Bonnie Prudden, famous for conducting the Kraus-Weber tests in Europe with Hans Kraus, published many articles blaming the sedentary lifestyle of Americans, and claimed that as a nation America could not defend itself due to poor physical fitness (Kolata 2003).

The 1952 Olympics and the "Muscle Gap"

As the Cold War began in 1947, increasing tension between the US and the Soviet Union manifested itself in many ways, including the masculine physical realm. During the Korean War, Colonel Lewis Puller warned "Our country won't go on forever, if we stay as soft as we are now. There won't be America. Because some foreign soldiers will invade us … and breed a hardier race" (De Oca 2013). It was clear that the bodies of American men were a physical and political vulnerability that needed to be hardened if America were to remain dominant on the global stage.

The first historical moment where US bodies were put in direct comparison with the Soviets during the Cold War was during the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki. For the first time, US and USSR athletes were pitted against each other in order to determine athletic, and thus political superiority, a coveted reward for success in the Games (Keys 2012). These Games were deeply attached to Cold War politics from the beginning; in the 1940s, the Soviets expressed their interest in joining the games, and American Avery Brundage, vice president of the Olympic Committee struggled with this proposition. After realizing that not allowing the Soviets to join could unnecessarily increase tensions between the US and USSR, he decided to allow them to compete (Soares 2007). Although the US "won" the games in terms of numerical medal count, the Soviets did surprisingly well in the weightlifting competition, taking home seven medals (Terry Todd 1994). Since weightlifting rhetoric often ties to strength and masculinity, the Soviet men, by performing so well were seen as more hardy and masculine than before, a shock to Americans that believed World War II destroyed the Soviets. According to professor Erin Redihan:

> Despite the United States' widely acknowledged sporting prowess before the Games, much of sport writing during and after the Games depicted the United States' team as David to Moscow's Goliath. These contrasts extended to the physical. When the Soviet gymnasts outpaced the Americans, newspapers noted, "the big-hipped broad-biceped

> Soviet amazons have demonstrated their superiority to our own svelte lassies." The lyrical descriptions of the American victory in the points total stood in clear juxtaposition to discussion of the Soviet team in Helsinki (Redihan 2018)

It was clear that the USSR was pumping governmental resources into its athletic programs to ensure a high medal count. Athletic triumphs were an official goal of the Soviets, as they incentivized amateur athletes to quit their jobs and concentrate on training, offering cash prizes to athletes who broke international records (Parks 2009). On the other hand, Truman simply urged Americans to contribute to the Olympic cause, offering no federal package to American athletes (Zita-Bennett 2013). The US found other ways to contribute resources to the Cold War strategy of defeating the Soviets in sport. Private organizations such as the United States Olympic Committee and the NCAA were responsible for raising funds from private donors and corporations, and college athletic programs were responsible for training athletes for the Olympics (De Oca 2012).

The media was again influential in its coverage of the 1952 Olympics, as it further colored the games with a concern for American softness and the triumph of communism as a consequence of losing. This nationalistic, high-stakes battle between two superpowers was too juicy of a story to ignore. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* called out "unpatriotic" Americans for not donating enough money to Olympic athletes, who were being out-funded by the Soviet government. The *Pittsburgh Press* also called for donations to combat the sphere of communism in the Olympics (Zita-Bennett 2013). This funding was similar to the calls for funding to American development of missiles or spacecraft, but instead the physical bodies of men were being used as weapons in the Cold War. Throughout the 1950s, it became clear that Americans were lagging behind in strength and muscle, as a third of draftees between 1950 and 1957 were considered unfit for duty, a repeating theme from the previous World Wars (De Oca 2013) Just

as the growing perception in the US was of a growing "missile gap", calls were also being made to close the "muscle gap" between American and Soviet men. In fact, *Reader's Digest* published an article entitled "Let's Close the Muscle Gap" (Eastman 1961), perfectly summarizing the media environment at the time. Also, according to Jeffrey Montez de Oca,

> The "muscle gap" was a period of Cold War anxiety projected onto the bodies of young, white males that produced a discourse fixated on their perceived softness and openness to communist penetration. The underlying anxiety was that youth would be unable to uphold the "national heritage" of expansionism built by the (hard) white men of previous generations (De Oca 2012)

The media also sought to drive a wedge between the US and USSR through sports coverage, news outlets also intensified in the 1950s, providing an interesting look into definitions of masculinities between the two superpowers. Soviet *Physical Culture and Sports* reported American men as narcissistic "sissies" who were only obsessed with muscular aesthetic and had no athletic ability. In contrast, American media labeled Soviets as unattractive, emotionless one trick ponies (Redihan 2017). It was clear that being strong, physically attractive, and personable defined American masculinity at the time. Due to the shocks of the Kraus report, this was the way to combat the lazy 1950s, as becoming more fit helped increase the masculinity of American men. However, for the Soviets, world domination was the only goal, and men who achieved results, men who could win, no matter what cost, were heralded as the most masculine (Redihan 2017).

Men by Any Means: Dr. Ziegler and Anabolic Steroids

As American masculinity at the outset of the Cold War was under attack, as seen in the Kraus-Hirschland report and the 1952 Olympics, the media made it very clear that Americans were becoming softer than their counterparts in the East. Suspicions of the Soviet weightlifting

victories did exist beginning in the 1952 Olympics. Bob Hoffman told the Associated Press "I know they're taking the hormone stuff to increase their strength" (Terry Todd 1994).

These suspicions were confirmed in the 1954 World Weightlifting Championships in Vienna, where US team physician Dr. John Ziegler carefully observed Soviet team activities. This event is cited as the first instance Western athletes heard about using performance enhancing drugs to win athletic competitions (Kunitz 2016). Ziegler knew the Soviets were using testosterone to specifically boost weightlifting performance, in contrast to the 1940s, where testosterone therapy was primarily used to improve mobility in older men (Luciano 2001). At Vienna, the Soviets took a 29-23 victory, leading Bob Hoffman to vow revenge; Dr. Ziegler was the perfect way to exact this revenge (Black 2013). Upon returning to America in 1954, Dr. Ziegler began experimenting with testosterone on himself and other famous American weightlifters. The reality of using these type of drugs in practice started to be considered a reality after the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne, where the USSR handily beat the US in medal count (Guttmann). Ziegler wanted a way to develop a hormonal medication, without the crippling side effects seen in Soviet lifters (Burstyn 1999). So two years later in 1958, with the help of Ziegler, pharmaceutical company Ciba released Dianabol - the first anabolic steroid in the US market.

As the itch to win against the Soviets and prove their true masculinity grew in the face of the Cold War, more and more American weightlifters began using Dianabol and winning competitions. Director of the New Orleans Athletic Club Irwin Poche said "If there was ever a time that tried men's souls … it is these hectic days when our very homes are at stake – these weeks and months when the Communist octopus is reaching his slimy tentacles all over the Earth" (Fair 1987). For Dr. Ziegler, being a sports physician for Americans competing on the

international stage parallel to the Cold War, there were no moral qualms with using available technology to beat the Soviets, and opposition to these steroids was insignificant. The physical strength created by Dianabol enabled a temporarily secure masculinity in the face of Soviet aggression, and this masculinity was coveted by any means necessary. Anti-doping sentiment was in the minority, and not until a Danish cyclist died at the 1960 Rome Olympics was there consideration to investigate the usage of performance enhancing drugs (Dimeo 2012).

Strong or Pretty? Hoffman vs Weider

Bob Hoffman, founder of the York Barbell Company and publisher of the influential *Strength and Health* magazine was pivotal in establishing definitions of masculinity during the Cold War (Fair 1987). He wanted to lead the men of York into victory on an international stage, because he believed the War was a "race between our nation and Russia in weightlifting as well as in all around industrial and war strength" (Fair 1987). A key part of Hoffman's strength propaganda was the belief that physical fitness was an integral part of America's dominance and success (Fair 1987). Thus, to secure his own success and retain the validity of his teaching in *Strength and Health,* Hoffman needed to make sure that his men were winning against the Communists. Hoffman's team took an edge over the Russians at the 1950 World Championships in Paris, which provided great leverage for the increased popularity of the magazine (Fair 1987). Adding further to this standing, American weightlifters were successful at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics (Fair 1987). These victories proved to Hoffman that the masculine ideal of strength was directly represented by "Strength and Health boys", and that this preservation of masculinity would maintain America's dominance internationally (Fair 1987). Hoffman truly believed red-blooded American men maintained their identity through weightlifting (Kolata 2003). He

stressed the important of gaining strength through international and Olympic weightlifting and focusing on physical performance; Hoffman mostly neglected any physique achievements by his lifters (Fair 1987).

In the 1950s, as Hoffman sought out the strength framework of masculinity – that a real American man is first and foremost strong, another fitness entrepreneur Joe Weider took a contradictory approach. Through his publications in *Your Physique and Muscle Power,* he promoted the idea that a muscular physique was a better goal to achieve as a man (Fair 1987). Shifting the focus to physique was a clever move by Weider, because even Hoffman's athletes looked strong and had big muscles. Weider wanted to capitalize on Hoffman's popularity but cause a paradigm shift in what men really wanted. Along with the rise of the glamorized male physique and bodybuilding at the mythical Muscle Beach in Santa Monica, California in the 1950s, Weider had a large customer base for his subsequent boom in popularity (Kolata 2003). He even sponsored bodybuilders at Muscle Beach, promoting the building of the male body for purely aesthetic reasons (Kolata 2003). Weider began a publishing empire, flaunting the ideal male body with bodybuilders in magazines that included *Muscle and Fitness, Flex, Men's Fitness,* and *Shape* (Kolata 2003). He also created the Mr. Olympia contest to draw spectators to witness the type of bodies his men were achieving (Kolata 2003).

The warring ideals of masculinity that Hoffman and Weider promoted through their publications and public image gives insight into the struggle the American man had with masculinity itself. Should he build muscles or lift the heaviest weights? And what does this mean for America in the Cold War? The two entrepreneurs did their best to persuade one side over the other in the ensuing media battle that leveraged everything from personal insults to scientific reasoning. Hoffman continually fought the idea that men should build bodies just for the sake of

building them, without a functional end (Kolata 2003). He believed that men should be able to complete feats of athleticism, and not just have a body for show, and attacked men that did so (Kolata 2003).

> A *boobybuilder* is usually a young man who has nothing better to do with his time than to spend four or five hours a day in a small gym doing bench presses and curls and lat pulley exercises. He usually wears his hair long and frequently gilds the lily by having it waved. He lives for his big moment where he can strut and posture under the glare of a spotlight before an audience of several hundred followers of a peculiar cult (Kolata 2003).

Hoffman even accused Weider of lying and using unethical tactics to gain viewership, accusations which Weider publicly denied (Fair 1987). Weider then personally challenged Hoffman to a strength and physique competition to prove who the real man was (Fair 1987). Even though Hoffman was 20 years older, he accepted the challenged (Fair 1987). These skirmishes eventually bubbled to the courtroom, as Weider sued Hoffman for libel and Hoffman sued Weider for conspiracy and character defamation (Kolata 2003). It was clear that both men would do anything to maintain their stronghold on their respective publishing empires.

Eventually, the tide of bodybuilding and his own old age was too much for Hoffman to handle. In addition, Americans began losing many Olympic and other international weightlifting events, resulting in the decline of American weightlifting (Kolata 2003). According to John Fair, the "Golden Age" of American weightlifting headed by Hoffman began in 1945 but ended in 1960 (Fair 1987). Ironically, it also may be true that Hoffman, through his display of weightlifting athletes, generated the initial intrigue of the muscled male body that lead to the rise of Muscle Beach and Joe Weider's empire (Kunitz 2016). Another reason is that early readers of *Strength and Health* may have mistaken Hoffman's emphasis on strength for an emphasis on muscle building by flaunting pictures of his athletes and promoting weight lifting in general (Schweig et al 1988).

The Cardiac Crisis and the Running Movement

In the 1940s and 50s, in addition to the lack of general physical fitness amongst Americans, the Cold War exposed American men as "soft. Only a few influential individuals focused attention on physical fitness; the layman did not prioritize it. The average working man did not feel like it was necessary to do exercise or become stronger because there was nothing proven to be negative about being sedentary, and the healthy folk were just lucky enough not to become diseased (Luciano 2001). Furthermore, medical advancements meant that fewer men were dying from infectious disease, as the number of deaths from it were at a substantial low in 1950 (Jones and Green 2013). However, the 1950s era of postwar luxury was stressing American men in ways that were unseen, and awareness of this stress caused a new interest in physical fitness as a means to stay healthy (Schrank 2015).

Arguably the moment in which American men were presented with how their heart could affect them was on Saturday September 24th 1955. Just a few months after the Kraus report, President Dwight Eisenhower suffered a heart attack and was subsequently hospitalized (Messerli et al 2005). This caused a nationwide panic, as Americans raised questions about the health of the American leader, and thus the health of the country. The economic markets paralleled the panic, as the Dow Jones dropped 6%, the largest decline since the Great Depression (Messerli et al 2005). Afterwards, Eisenhower's physician stated that stress, diet, and exercise were key risk factors in this these kind of cardiac events, and American men paid attention (Messerli et al 2005). Eisenhower would go on to have twenty-one cardiac events until his death in 1969 (Messerli et al 2005).

Dr. Shelly McKenzie, a lecturer at George Washington University noted that in 1956, coronary heart disease was the leading cause of death in men over 30 (McKenzie 2013).

Widespread heart disease exacerbated men's concerns about a weak heart after Eisenhower's heart attack. Complaints about weak men in the Korean War also took on a cardiovascular tone, and scientific findings revealed that those soldiers had plaque buildup in their arteries (McKenzie 2013). Furthermore, continued studies in the 1950s on lifestyle revealed that diet and physical exercise were risk factors for developing this new disease (McKenzie 2013). A popular study by British epidemiologist showed that double-decker bus drivers, who sat all day had a higher rate of heart attacks than the conductors who would spend all day walking up and down (Kunitz 2016).

The weakness of the male heart presented another blow to masculinity, which was already on the decline during the athletic prowess of the Soviets in the Cold War, increase in women's power at home, and monotonous white-collar desk jobs (McKenzie 2013). The media took notice of this shift in gender roles and began to influence male insecurity about manhood. In 1954, *Life* Magazine suggested American men were being domesticated (Clarke). In 1957, *Cosmopolitan* published a special addition about American men, claiming that the social pace in the 50s had made men insecure (Ellis and Meyer 2009). In 1958, *Look* magazine published an illustrated book titled *The Decline of the American Male*, which suggested women were dominating men (Clarke 2008).

This loss of manhood was coupled with a distrust for American institutions to provide a solution. First, American medicine was not able to combat chronic illness for older men. Second, federal organizations like the fitness councils failed to give men any hardiness to withstand the changing times and increased affluence (Rader 1991). Since the new problem for men, after the eradication of infectious disease, was attached closely to individualistic lifestyle choices, men in the sixties and beyond turned inwards to achieve salvation (Rader 1991). The emphasis on the

self-became a large theme in rescuing lost masculinity, and to do this, American men looked closely that their daily routines, and sought to augment their bodies to become more physically fit (Rader 1991).

One method men used to express bodily achievement is forms of cardio, like jogging and running, that would increase cardiovascular health, among other things. In 1967, University of Oregon track coach Bill Bowerman published Jogging, a training manual that provided adults in "poor condition" with a twelve-week training schedule (McKenzie 2013). On the heels of *Jogging,* in his popular 1968 book *Aerobics*, Dr. Kenneth Cooper formalized more specific recommendations for attaining aerobic fitness, and argued that only sufficiently "strenuous" exercise would result in significant cardiovascular benefits (Rader 1991). His work started a craze for jogging and running that would result in the creation of health clubs around the nation (Kolata). In 1970, three million Americans claimed to run regularly (Plymire 2004). Initially, the running population at the time mostly consisted of middle-aged, high class, overweight men that were trying to reverse poor lifestyles they had grown accustomed to in the postwar luxury era (Kunitz 2016). *Time* magazine claimed "the cult of physical fitness has developed into a national middle-aged obsession" (Time Magazine 1968). Popularized running for pleasure had not yet taken hold yet.

The media again was influential in creating the hype behind this cardio craze around the nation. *Runner's* World magazine was founded in the 1960s and became the largest circulation running magazine in the US (Hardin, Dodd, Chance 2005). America learned that astronaut John Glenn subscribed to Cooper's recommendations (Rader 1991). *The Runner* magazine also hit the mainstream, cementing running as an everyman's sport, especially for white, middle-class men in the 1970s (Kunitz 2016).

ABC television covered the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, giving special attention to the amazing comeback win by American runner Frank Shorter (Rader 1991). Men looked at Shorter and found an ideal of physical self-improvement that they could aspire to become and in the process triumph over the weakness of the male heart. Running also became much more than just an improvement in physical fitness. It became a way to release endorphins and achieve the coveted "runners high", increasing awareness and control (Rader 1991).

Furthermore, running created a unique subculture where men could band together and run together socially, likely providing a safe haven from the threatening white collar workplace. A California pathologist Thomas Bassler wrote about the miraculous immunity that comes from long-distance running in his Marathon Hypothesis, which became a controversial topic receiving press coverage in the 1970s (Kunitz 2016). David Crossen, a New York Times journalist captures this debate in a 1979 piece:

> Dr. Bassler's view was disputed in an article in The New England Journal of Medicine, which reported on five autopsies of coronary atherosclerosis in marathon runners. The authors added, however, that their findings did not indicate whether marathon running provided partial protection against heart disease, whether extensive training reduced the rate of atherosclerotic progression or whether marathon running hastened death in these cases. Four out of the five runners had a history of smoking, one of the known risk factors for heart disease (Crossen 1979).

Breaking the Physique Barrier

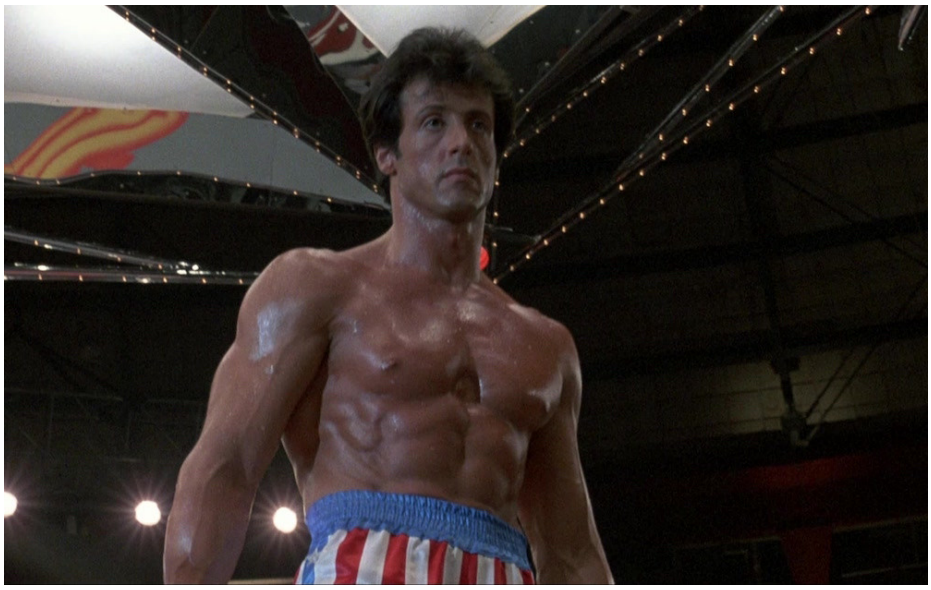
For many American men, running was a surprising deviation from the ideal of the strong patriotic ideal, creating a lean and skinny aesthetic that looked weak and gaunt at times. Blue-collar workers who were physically active in their daily jobs were confused by the running movement because it seemed less masculine than football and weightlifting. According to Daniel Kunitz:

> While white-collar men gasped on treadmills and jogging tracks, and were soon joined by growing numbers of women, blue-collar Americans showed little interest in running or any other aerobic sports. The average marathon runner was described as "a male, 34 years old, college-educated, physically fit, and well-off" (Kunitz 2016).

Furthermore, with the popularization of health clubs during the running movement in the 1970s, as more people began to go to the gym, fitness became less about heart health and more about looking good (Kunitz 2016). More emphasis was placed on the individual and even the common man started to become focused on augmenting his physique. Tom Wolfe aptly labeled this decade the Me Decade, as male body image was front and center in the issue of masculinity (Black 2013). Prominent Novelist Norman Mailer complained "The 70s was the decade in which people put emphasis on the skin, on the surface, rather on the root of things. It was the decade in which image became preeminent because nothing deeper was going on" (qtd. in Black 2013).

According to Jan Todd, the emphasis on the male image and physique experienced a breakthrough back in 1958 with the release of the Italian made movie, *The Labor of Hercules* starring American bodybuilder Steve Reeves (Todd and Obrien 2014). Reeves exemplified the ideal male body and displayed his attractive muscularity for international audiences to gaze admiringly at. After Hercules, the amount of media showing bodybuilder types like Reeves increased, and images of macho, muscular men became increasingly normalized as well (Todd and Obrien 2014). "I broke the physique barrier in show business" reflects Reeves, who opened the door for bodybuilders to seek media exposure, especially acting in movies (qtd. in Todd and Obrien 2014). With the precedent Reeves set with his body in an international spectacle of a movie in *Hercules*, the stigma of bodybuilders as obsessive, narcissistic, and sexually insecure gradually began to decline throughout the 1960s (Todd and Obrien 2014). On the heels of Reeves' popularity blossomed another hard-bodied star: Sylvester Stallone. After being inspired by Steve Reeves' films, Stallone began a regimen of intense weight training to build his body in

a similar fashion (Todd and Obrien 2014). His performances in *Rocky* and *Rambo* further emphasized the male body and the associated masculinity colored by themes of violence and aggression (Todd and Obrien 2014).



Sylvester Stallone in Rocky (Avildsen 1976)

Steve Reeves as Hercules (Sourced from Todd and Obrien 2014, page 9)

With a more accepting view of the male physique, the "Me Decade" then became perfectly suited for the rise in popularity of the bodybuilding movement. The First Mr. Olympia physique competition was held in September of 1965 (Black 2013). At first it only had three contestants; bodybuilding was seen as overly narcissistic and muscles simply for physique were seen as pointless (Luciano 2001). But over the next decades, physique competitions like Mr. Olympia and Mr. Universe began drawing huge crowds (Black 2013). It became common for these competitions to attract $50,000 grand prizes (Luciano 2001). Spectators spent hundreds of dollars to see human feats of muscularity (Luciano 2001). Like most individualized sports, the moment was waiting for a superstar to take over (Black 2013). This superstar was Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Schwarzenegger had just won the Mr. Universe competition in London but had never been to America (Black 2013). After arriving, he only spoke broken English, but quickly enrolled in evening classes at UCLA, launched a bricklaying business, and bought real estate (Black 2013). He became a regular at Gold's Gym, which grew to 400 franchises worldwide, partly because of Schwarzenegger's participation (Black 2013). The bodybuilding documentary *Pumping Iron* released in 1977, putting Arnold's body on full display (Luciano 2001). Men were in awe at his huge body but refined intellect, and also his use of bodybuilding as a heterosexual pursuit, pointing his "guns" at women at any opportunity (Kunitz 2016). The media was heavily involved in lifting Arnold into fame, as he was featured in *The Today Show, Cosmopolitan, Stay Hungry,* and countless muscle and fitness magazines (Black 2013). Arnold was not just a narcissistic behemoth, but instead provided a fresh perspective on the health benefits of bodybuilding, a welcome ideology in an era where an improved body meant improved happiness

(Luciano 2001). The self-improvement aspect of Schwarzenegger's bodybuilding utilized similar themes to Sandow, MacFadden, and Roosevelt earlier in the century.

Poster for *Pumping Iron* (Butler 1977)

Conclusion

Throughout the 20th century, masculinity has been deeply attached to strength and a corresponding physique for men. The ideal man over different periods in the century looked muscular and had muscular power; this ideal was manifested through individuals such as Eugen Sandow, Charles Atlas, and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Furthermore, the US economy over the three periods has indirectly influenced on the ability for men to achieve this ideal.

At the turn of the century, the growth of cities seemed too much for men to handle, as they felt a loss of masculine values that existed in the 19th century. In essence, the economy was growing and changing too quickly, which was threatening to men. Roosevelt's own strenuous life set a model for Americans to recover masculinity through personal intervention, and Sandow and MacFadden capitalized on this market opportunity.

In contrast, during the Great Depression, the economic downturn correlated more directly to a loss of masculinity. Since men could no longer provide for their families, their sense of manhood was diminished. Recovery of masculinity presented itself through FDR's New Deal programs that allowed men to restore themselves physically, fulfilling a purpose that was lacking after the Depression. Furthermore, the US entrance into World War II placed pressure on physical education programs to better equip the male body for war and American society.

And finally, in the Golden Age of Capitalism after World War II, the overall increase of American affluence increased the perception of laziness, as the factor of self-improvement was no longer necessary. Thus, as comparisons began between the US and Europe during the Cold War, postwar luxury embarrassed American men, as they realized their masculinity might not be enough. With steroids, these men attempted to quickly close the "muscle gap" and retain dominance over the Soviet Union, which shifted focus to male strength as an important pursuit to

recover masculinity, a view championed by Bob Hoffman. Additionally, in this era Reeves was able to break the physique barrier for men in film and allow for Stallone and Schwarzenegger to achieve fame and fortune. As gym membership rose, men began to become focused on their physique, influenced as well by Joe Weider's publishing empire. Bodybuilding became immensely popular with the Mr. Olympia and Mr. Universe competitions drawing record crowds. The male physique became the symbol of what it means to be a man, and building such a muscular body was a way to recover from postwar laziness.

These periods of "lost" masculinity, partially influenced by economic factors, inspired leaders to advocate for change on the behalf of American men. Presidents, physicians, entrepreneurs, and journalists alike wanted men to work hard to distance America from a plaguing sense of "softness", in all three periods. This motivation created publishing empires led by Sandow and MacFadden, all-male athletic organizations like the YMCA, the President's Council for Youth Fitness, the CCC, and anabolic steroids. However, the most significant changes to an increased emphasis on strength and physique was caused in the political sphere, through international conflict. Improving American manhood was vital if the nation were to dominate globally. This is why World War I and II, through physical battle, and The Cold War, through battles of ideology and sport, were so influential in pushing the importance for physical fitness. The push for men to become physically active, and intervene in their own lives by augmenting their bodies was a large reason masculinity became temporarily recovered.

These phases of lost and subsequent recovery of masculinity through physical intervention give insight into a part of what American men value and the stipulation they place on their own masculinity. This is a universal idea not bound to the chronology treated in this thesis, and can potentially apply to the modern era of social media fitness. In social media, the

display of strength and physique on such a wide scale is unprecedented. Every day, we are exposed to thousands of images of strong and muscular men and can access such information in the palms of our hands. The ideal man is defined extensively and repeatedly, creating a unique arena for both self-display but also self-consciousness for men. Publicly competitive landscapes like social media present interesting implications for masculinity by visually presenting physique and strength. Such imagery can be both harmful by increasing male anxiety about their bodies and thus their masculine self-identity, but also beneficial in increasing the motivation to live, as the great Theodore Roosevelt put it, the “strenuous life”

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